➤ Extension of social security benefits like provident funds, pension etc. to all AWWs/AWHs.

➤ Enhancement of honorarium to Rs. 3,000/- for AWWs and Rs. 2,000/- to AWHs.

(c) With a view to consider the demands of Anganwadi Workers (AWWs) and Anganwadi Helpers (AWHs) Government constituted a Review Committee for examining current levels of honorarium and related issues of Anganwadi Workers and Helpers. The Report of the Review Committee is under the consideration of the Government.

Engineering colleges in the country

*34. DR. M.A.M. RAMASWAMY: Will the Minister of HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

(a) the total number of engineering colleges in the country;

(b) whether it is a fact that these colleges are facing acute shortage of qualified professors and lecturers;

(c) if so, the measures being taken to meet the shortage;

(d) whether it is also a fact that Government have imposed a ban on recruitment of teachers; and

(e) if so, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT (SHRI ARJUN SINGH): (a) to (e) The total number of degree level Engineering institutions approved by the All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) is 1617. These colleges are facing acute shortage of qualified professors and lecturers.

AICTE had constituted a high-powered Committee on "Faculty Development in Technical Institutions" under the Chairmanship of Prof. P. Rama Rao. The Committee in its Report has recommended several measures for faculty development. The Report has been accepted in principle by the Executive Committee of the AICTE. Subject to the availability of funds during the Eleventh Five Year Plan, these recommendations will be implemented. Considering the shortage of well-qualified technical faculty in the country, the age of superannuation of teachers in the Centrally funded Institutions of higher and technical education has been enhanced from 62 years to 65 years. The Central Government has not imposed any ban on the recruitment of teachers.

Poly Metalic Nodule Programme

*35. SHRI HARISH RAWAT:
SHRI SANTOSH BAGRODIA:

Will the Minister of EARTH SCIENCES be pleased to state:

(a) the details of progress made in the poly Metallic Nodule programme in terms of mining of nodules during the last five years;

(b) whether Government propose to expand the metallurgical extraction facilities and their capacity; and

(c) whether the programme has attained commercial viability?

THE MINISTER OF EARTH SCIENCES (SHRI KAPIL SIBAL): (a) As a part of phase-wise development of a mining system capable of operation up to water depth of 6 km., various technology developmental activities were carried out by National Institute of Ocean Technology, Chennai (the technical arm of the Ministry of Earth Sciences) during the last five years. As a first phase of development, a prototype shallow bed mining system capable of working up to a depth of 500 m was designed and developed. The system has been demonstrated successfully at a water depth of 451 meters off Malvan coast. Development of integrated mining module with collector and crusher is under progress. An in-situ soil sampler to measure the soil bearing strength capable of operating at a water depth of 6 km was also designed and developed. This was successfully tested at a water depth of 5200 m .

(b) No, Sir. The semi-continuous pilot plant of 500 kg per day capacity has been established. This would suffice for validating various processes developed by research laboratories in India *viz.*, Institute of Minerals and Materials Technology (earlier Regional Research Laboratory), Bhubneshwar, National Metallurigical Laboratory, Jamshedpur and Hindustan Zinc Ltd. at Udaipur. The pilot plant has already exceeded the laboratory recovery efficiency in respect of metal values (copper, nickel and cobalt).

(c) No, Sir. The Poymetallic Nodule programme is not commercially viable at current prices of metals.

Implementation of Sachhar Committee Report

*36. KUMARI NIRMALA DESHPANDE: Will the Minister of MINORITY AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) the steps planned to implement the recommendations of the Sachhar Committee Report; and

(b) the reasons for the delay in implementation thereof?

THE MINISTER OF MINORITY AFFAIRS (SHRI A.R. ANTULAY): (a) and (b) The recommendations of the Sachhar Committee have already been considered by Government and a decision taken regarding the follow up action. The salient features are given below:-

(i) Targeted intervention is proposed for improvement of basic amenities and employment opportunities in 90 identified minority concentration districts which are backward in terms of various developmental parameters.

(ii) Appropriate measures will be taken to improve the deficiency in civic amenities and economic opportunities in 338 identified towns and cities with substantial population of minorities including Muslims. An inter-ministerial task force is already working on this to recommend appropriate strategies in this regard.

(iii) An inter-ministerial group will plan and monitor the implementation of a comprehensive programme for skill and entrepreneurship development among the Muslim community and for ensuring easy and smooth access to credit to the minorities, and Muslims in particular. "Clusters", having